

Developing a Talent Pipeline

»» For D&I Staff, Executive Leadership Council, HR Leaders and Business Partners, Resource-Group Leaders, Mentors/Mentees, Sponsors/Protégés

III Exposure to Senior Executives

Whether it's through formal or informal [mentoring/sponsorship](#), rotating positions for employee-resource-group leaders on the [executive diversity council](#), or talent-development programs for high-potentials, getting younger people, especially those from underrepresented groups, before top management regularly is critical to retention, engagement and a healthy pipeline.

Many successful talent-development programs, such as [EY's Career Watch](#), recognize the benefits of exposure to the top ranks. This gives the high-potential employee valuable skills in presenting, networking and understanding what it takes to move to the top level. It also creates the ability for organic mentoring, sponsorship and one-on-one coaching. It also can lead to a top executive seeing the potential for a new career path for the employee or recommending further training or education.

The methods of this exposure vary widely, and some companies use several simultaneously. Some organizations mandate that their top executives must start a relationship or mentor or sponsor at least one high-potential from an underrepresented group. This is increasingly part of performance reviews and compensation. Other organizations hold specific events in which top leaders are exposed to these high-potentials. Putting employee-resource-group leaders on the executive diversity council or having the group leaders regularly present to top management also is increasingly valuable exposure.

?? Guided Questions for Staff

»» **How much exposure to top levels do your employee-resource-group leaders receive?**

Are you picking resource-group leaders from lower levels so you can develop talent? Are you scheduling small-group meetings with the CEO and senior leadership on a regular basis to give the leaders the benefit of the resource group's insights and to increase their involvement with one another? Are your most senior executives the [sponsors of resource groups](#)?

»» **Do your executives receive cultural-competence training?**

This training, especially on hidden biases, is necessary to create successful relationships, especially in mentoring and sponsorship pairs.

»» **Are your top leaders being held accountable for developing these relationships? Is becoming a cross-cultural mentor or sponsor part of their performance reviews?**

While most executives will embrace the idea of mentoring or sponsoring high-potentials from underrepresented groups, not all will—and not all will be successful. How are you “forcing the issue”? How are you assessing the success of these relationships?